

REFUGEE

Arizona Refugee Resettlement Journal

resettlement

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LOST BOYS AND GIRLS NATIONAL CONFERENCE

‘A TREMENDOUS SUCCESS’

A tremendous success. Beyond my anticipation.”

This is how Camelia Assem describes the Lost Boys & Lost Girls National Reunion & Conference, held Aug. 26-29 in Phoenix.

“The biggest plus was simply to bring 1,000 Lost Boys & Girls together,” stated the Executive Director of the Arizona Lost Boys Center.

Other highlights of the four-day event include:

- Nine national officers were elected, including three of the 89 Lost Girls living in the U.S.
- Health screening for schistosomiasis.



- Work progressed to create a non-profit organization and to write a constitution.

- Outlaw Productions, planning a film on Lost Boys & Girls, donated \$50,000 for a national website.

Conference organizers included Ms. Assem, Jany Deng, Michael Shapiro and Marsha Henzler of the Phoenix Lost Boys Center, and Ann Wheat, City of Phoenix.

The planning, underway since November, also involved 12 Lost Boys from 12 states.

The conference, headquartered in the Phoenix Civic Plaza, included welcomes from Phoenix Mayor Phil Gordon and Councilman Mike Johnson.

Special evening events included a Sudanese dinner and a banquet, both at nearby Heritage Square, and

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IRC OFFERS NEW YOUTH PROGRAM

A still-evolving Youth Program, an International Refugee Committee (IRC) project open to all nationalities, is already offering tremendous benefits to refugee youth in the Valley. Ashraf Nasr, Senior Program Specialist, says these include:

- Building confidence in participants
- Promoting leadership and cooperation with peers
- Learning how America operates

“We’ve held hiking trips and recreation projects, including attending a Phoenix Suns game,” said Nasr. “Plus field trips, including a Coca-Cola bottling plant, where the kids were just amazed at the manufacturing process.”

“Of course, just like for American kids, the activities we plan have to be interesting and fun in order to build attendance.”

As well as recreational activities, the new Youth Program is exposing the participants to law enforcement operations in order to build trust. In coordination with Lt. Warren Taylor and the Phoenix Police Department, the program anticipates about 10 youth will attend a crime prevention conference in Florida next spring.

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The giant climbing wall was a favorite activity at summer camp.

A LETTER FROM THE STATE COORDINATOR

Dear Colleagues,

Sept. 30, 2004 closed Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2004, a year that was very busy and filled with unique challenges. Arizona's voluntary refugee agencies resettled 2,360 refugees, a share of the 52,868 refugees admitted to the United States for the year, and the first time that refugee arrivals in our state have reached historic levels since before the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. Though the national number did not reach the 70,000 U.S. refugee admissions ceiling provided for in the FFY-04 Presidential Determination, the number slightly surpassed the 50,000 ceiling for refugees specifically allocated by world regions.

For three years, United States refugee resettlement agencies have straddled the fine line of insolvency and sustainability; largely the result of decreases both in refugee arrivals and traditional funding streams. Arizona's refugee service agencies have weathered an ominous storm of uncertainty. They continue, nonetheless, to work diligently to find innovative and creative ways to fund and meet the unique needs of refugees who arrive from increasingly diverse backgrounds and the harshest of living conditions. As a result of this unwavering commitment to save refugees, our state's refugee provider network continues to earn national and international respect.

Arizona's refugee families—including single parents, adolescent children, and grandparents—are working hard to support themselves and to successfully make the difficult transition to life in their new homeland. With inspiring fortitude, refugees have survived enslavement, torture, ethnic cleansing, civil war, and peril in refugee camps, with the hope that they may live away from merciless brutality. They are, however, among a tiny fraction of the world's refugees for whom this is an option.

The current condition of our nation's response to the global plight of refugees is bleak. There are an estimated twelve million refugees in the world today, with over seven million subsisting in refugee camps. This "warehousing" of refugees is of great humanitarian concern, as rescue and relief efforts are hampered by dangerously inhospitable conditions in countries of asylum and the significantly reduced levels of refugee admissions into the United States and the nine other traditional resettlement countries. Today, those refugees who manage to escape persecution, and who eventually are among the small fraction to reach a third country for resettlement, will have spent an average of ten years languishing in refugee camps. During these long periods of limbo,

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PHOENIX LOST BOYS CENTER

A PEEK INSIDE A MODEL CENTER

Housed in a warehouse, near railroad tracks in industrial Phoenix, the Arizona Lost Boys Center from outside looks like anything but what it is—a model for centers nationwide.

Once inside, the transformation is breathtaking.

Walls, painted a variety of warm orange and complementing colors, are decorated with murals and paintings of African scenes. Bustling about are boys representing the 350-some Sudanese based in Greater Phoenix, as well as staff members and volunteers.

Various rooms house meeting facilities, a computer/internet center, recreation outlets and a craft center to create from clay the African cows that have become a symbol for Lost Boys.

“We don’t know whether national grants will be extended,” says Camelia Assem, the Center’s Executive Director. “But we are teaching our boys to take over this Center.

“In addition to helping with job and housing searches, we’ve provided 80 scholarships since November, 2003. A large percentage of Lost Boys go to school and work full time.

“When you realize that the U.S. only supports these boys for four months, during which they try to get a job while learning our ways and language, you get an idea of our tremendous challenge.”

The Arizona Lost Boys Center doesn’t sit around waiting for big grants to keep it operating. Director Camelia Assem says income has included such methods as:

- An Oct. 11 public exhibit by Valley Photographer Loren Anderson, who photographed Sudanese camps and refugees in Kenya. Anderson donated exhibit entrance fees and photo sale proceeds to the Lost Boys Center, and will continue to do so as the exhibit travels the Valley.

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LIBERIANS ARRIVE IN ARIZONA IN INCREASING NUMBERS

Who knew it would be this way? That 435 Liberians would be the second largest refugee group into Arizona over the past year? That natives of a country founded by the U.S.—with a government modeled after America, whose name means “liberty,”—don’t necessarily speak good English, or understand our ways better than other refugees? That Liberians would be brutalized in their own country, then persecuted in an adjoining nation? That they would arrive as U.S. refugee funding was tightening?

Robin Dunn Marcos finds it all not only ironic, but more than a little sad.

The regional director of Arizona’s International Rescue Committee office has a special feeling for the country where she served as a Peace Corps volunteer in the late ‘80s, early ‘90s.

“Lack of funding doesn’t help,” she points out. “Our partners in aiding the Liberians are Catholic Social Services, Lutheran Social Ministry and Betania Community Center. The United States supplies each agency with \$800 per refugee. And that’s it.”

Moses Kollie and wife Felicia typify the horror Liberians experienced after civil war broke out in their country in 1989.

After he saw his father murdered, Moses and Felicia were fleeing the country when soldiers beat him unconscious. He was left for dead, later imprisoned.

He escaped and two years later found his wife in an Ivory Coast refugee camp. After living there 11 years on relief agency food and wages from menial labor, and raising five children, they fled when the Ivory Coast blamed Liberians for unrest in that country.

The Kollies were brought to Arizona in September, 2003. Living in West Phoenix, he now supports his family of eight (a daughter arrived earlier this year) on a resort housekeeping job and says he’s never had it so good.

Mercy Nyepon is a 24-year-old who helps teach English to Liberian youth in a Glendale elementary school. She lives with bad memories and present hardships. She is separated from her husband and son, who live in Sweden under that country’s refugee program. In Liberia, she watched her own father being murdered.

Dunn Marcos says it wasn’t uncommon in Liberia’s civil war for citizens to be forced to clap, sing and dance while they watched their family or others be raped, tortured or beheaded.

“It was very brutal,” she says.

“Today, Liberians want the American ‘dream.’ They want to work, not to go on welfare.

“But it takes funds to help them learn our language and to integrate them into a whole new way of life. That’s our goal, and the goal of every agency helping them.” ■

NEW YOUTH PROGRAM

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Another encouraging phase of the Youth Program is called Teen Time. Xavier and Brophy high schools already provide weekly meeting space and volunteer student peers to help refugees "fit in." This is an activity the IRC wants to expand to other schools.



Nasr believes this school year will accelerate the number of Youth Program participants to date—144. Attendance at events averages more than 20. Getting leaders among the students to attend events is a key to growth, he says.

While still in its infancy, the program has set six lofty goals:

- A computer lab at the IRC for refugee youth
- After-school tutoring to assist with homework
- A program to encourage college enrollment
- Prompting youth leaders to become role models
- Offering more summer camp trips
- Monetary recognition

The after-school tutoring program continues to build on the current success of the refugee students.

According to Nasr, "Overall, refugees are probably represented on high school honor rolls in the same proportion as Americans. That's outstanding."

IRC's Youth Program, funded for three years as the Family Enrichment Program, is beginning its third year of operation. "Our newest group, refugees from Liberia, has 44 students in the Youth Program already," said Nasr. "That's a very good number. The huge upside to a really good program for refugee youth makes this project a high priority. I hope its funding will continue."

For additional information on this program, contact Ashaf Nasr at 602-433-2440. ■



STATE COORDINATOR LETTER

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refugees are increasingly vulnerable to growing discontent and violent acts of resentment within host countries.

The Presidential Determination for refugee admissions during FFY-05 is again 70,000, and remains a departure from higher historic U.S. annual refugee admissions ceilings since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. Refugee and humanitarian organizations are calling upon our country to lead the world by example to end the warehousing of refugees. The Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees adopted on July 28, 1951, of which the United States is a signatory, affirms that human beings shall enjoy fundamental rights and freedoms without discrimination, and, having manifested profound concern for refugees, endeavors that they enjoy the widest possible exercise of these fundamental rights and freedoms.

On Sept. 21, 2004, Lavinia Limon, Executive Director of the U.S. Committee for Refugees, offered testimony before the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration and Border Security. In her

statements, Ms. Limon said, "We believe it would be enormously helpful if the Senate passed a resolution calling for the end of refugee warehousing. This would be a powerful signal to the world that it's time to honor refugee rights. Congress should also authorize a pilot program that would 1) develop a plan for the strategic use of funding to motivate the granting of Convention rights to refugees, such as reimbursement schemes for expenses incurred by host governments and 2) develop alternative models of assisting refugees outside traditional camp settings in a manner compatible with the exercise of Convention rights. Congress should also request a report from the State Department on how refugee assistance is or could be used to promote refugee rights."

There is no apparent will on the part of the United States to forego such strategic humanitarian intervention, but with millions of refugees' lives hanging in the balance - there is no time to wait.

Charles Shipman

Charles Shipman ■

CUBAN & HAITIAN COMMUNITIES PRESENT DIFFERENT CHALLENGES

Aid to ease Cuban and Haitian refugees and entrants into Arizona living patterns is covered under a Cuban Haitian Initiative Grant, instituted in 2003 and renewed this year.

But accomplishing this presents different challenges, according to Juliet Paez, Community Development Coordinator for the International Rescue Committee (IRC), Phoenix office. As one of the lead agencies implementing this grant the IRC has discovered the two communities integrate very differently.

"Cubans were highly motivated just to reach America. They tend to forge ahead to get jobs, even form small businesses," she says. This independence, however has kept this community from becoming aware of and utilizing some of the services available to them.

For example, Cubans 60 and older must become U.S. citizens in seven years or lose important assistance. Half of this group is at risk, because a knowledge of basic English is needed to pass the citizenship test.

"Teaching them the language is a big job. We could help them more if they were more cohesive," said Paez.

Aided by the Area Agency on Aging, Region I, a group of elderly Cubans recently formed Cubanos Unidos Para Ser Ciudadanos (Cubans United To Become Citizens) to encourage learning English.

To further assist building community, the IRC working with Cuban leaders selected Oct. 10 as the date to hold a community gathering at their training center to celebrate Cuba's independence from Spain. New arrivals had the opportunity to gather with other

Cubans who have been in the community for a longer period of time, enjoy Cuban food, listen to the recitation of Cuban poetry, better understand the support system and most importantly, take another step in promoting togetherness.

Meanwhile, the Haitian community is showing the ability to become organized. They have already formed several non-profit groups to raise funds from foundations and corporations, for example.

"This is an area where we can really be of help to the Haitians," said Paez.

"Both communities are vibrant and show initiative. For example, many Cubans are striving to attract more artists, musicians and writers to help spotlight their culture."

An equal partner with IRC in meeting these goals is Catholic Social Services, that handles case management and job placement.

Arizona's Refugee Resettlement Program in early September reported that since 1980, it has helped settle 2,737 Cubans and 139 Haitians. The rate of immigration, which slowed greatly after the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, is now increasing.

Cuba's numbers in 2004 are more than 2002 and 2003 refugee totals combined. "For Cubans and Haitians

both, we will continue to promote organizations that focus on social needs. Also important is exposing these communities to our police, libraries and other government systems," said Paez.

"But our primary goal is to help form organizations and a sense of community. This is the best way to help them recognize and meet their own needs." ■

"For Cubans and

Haitians both, we will

continue to promote

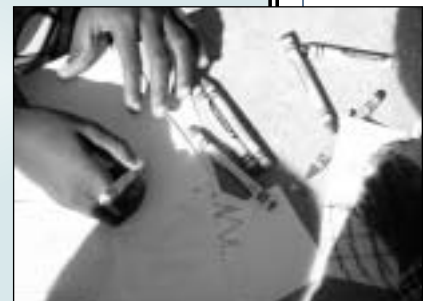
organizations that

focus on social needs."

**Arizona refugees and their families are invited to attend
the annual picnic sponsored by
Refugee Advisory Council on Crime (RACC).**

**Nov. 22 at Cortez Park
(35th Ave. and Dunlap)
10 a.m. – 4 p.m.**

**The fun-filled day will consist of
games and picnic food for everyone.
Last year more than 100 refugees and
their families attended this free event.**



LOST BOYS & GIRLS CONFERENCE

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an optional trip to Camelview Theater to view the Valley opening of "Lost Boys of Sudan" a film about the Lost Boys.

The conference marked the first official reunion for the 3,800 Lost Boys & Girls of Sudan accepted by the U.S. in 2001 for resettlement. Those refugees were among many thousands of children who, in the 1990s, survived walks of up to 1,000 miles to refugee camps in Kenya. ■



Above and left, Lost Boys gather at the Phoenix Civic Center. Below, Lost Boys Choe Jok and Bawang Kwabure join Ann Wheat.



CONFERENCE PROVIDES UNIQUE HEALTH OPPORTUNITY

Of those attending the conference, 464 were tested for schistosomiasis—a parasitic worm condition not found in the U.S., but affects 200 million worldwide and is common in Sudan, Kenya and Ethiopia. The results, available in 24 hours, showed that 43 percent tested positive.

"Most of the positive cases were treated by the doctors immediately," said Camelia Assem of the Lost Boys Center. "Federal officials provided the five necessary pills. To show there was no need to be frightened, I was even the first to be tested." ■



2005 ARIZONA STATE REFUGEE CONFERENCE

Building on the success of the 2004 Conference, the 2005 Arizona State Refugee Conference is scheduled to be held April 18-19 at the Black Canyon Conference Center, 9440 N. 25th Ave., Phoenix. Official registration materials will be mailed early in 2005.

The conference will provide a lively forum for anyone interested in learning about existing refugee services, and how Arizona can continue to be a leader in refugee resettlement.

For more information about the conference, contact Linda McAllister (International Rescue Committee) at 602-433-2440, Ext. 221, or Linda@phx.theirc.org. ■

FIRST ARIZONA BRYCS TRAINING SESSION

Refugee resettlement is one of America's honorable traditions. For those of us directly involved in responding to one of the world's greatest humanitarian crises, we know that refugee resettlement has its share of joys, heartaches and sacrifices. It takes special people to do this work ...

Addressing about 100 special people gathered in Phoenix on Aug. 18 was Bonnie Wood, Program & Project Specialist for Arizona's Office of Refugee Resettlement (RRP), speaking for Charles Shipman, Arizona's State Refugee Coordinator.

The occasion was the first statewide training session for Bridging Youth and Children's Services (BRYCS), a national joint venture of the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Migration and Refugee Services.

Speaking for Catholic Social Services (CSS), Phoenix, which hosted and led the organization of the event, Joanne Durkin said attendance by mainstream agencies was "excellent, very heartening."

"The interest in services available for refugee children and families was high and response by school districts since then has been very good," said the CSS Training Coordinator.

One training session panel—"10 Tips in Working with Refugee Families," presented by five refugee parents employed by five different refugee resettlement agencies—was so well received it is now offered to interested school districts and others.

"Key issues discussed included cultures, child-rearing practices, Child Protective Services (CPS) policies, and the mental health of refugee children," explained Durkin. "There has been an increased desire by refugees to learn more about CPS." To help answer this need, a program by CPS for refugee parents is

tentatively set for December, via the Strengthening Refugee Families Program.

In addition to CSS, the task force which planned the Aug. 18 event included CPS, International Rescue Committee, Betania Community Center, Lutheran Social Ministry of the Southwest, Summit High School, Washington Elementary School District, Association for Supportive Child Care, Refugee Women United for Progress and the Somali Association of Arizona.

"Our goal was to provide an opportunity for refugee service and mainstream child welfare providers, as well as Arizona refugees, to learn from each other to better serve and support refugee children and families," shared Durkin.

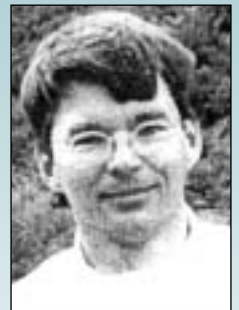
More information about BRYCS activities is available through: www.brycs.org, 1-888-572-6500 and/or info@brycs.org. ■

IN MEMORIAL

Attila Magyar, the Special Refugee Services Coordinator for Catholic Social Services (CSS) in Phoenix, lost his life in a tragic hiking accident Oct. 3, in the White Tank Mountains west of Phoenix.

Attila, 39, was himself a refugee from Hungary. Barbara Klimek, Director of Refugee Programs for CSS said, "In his five years here, he devoted himself to educating our community, developing a strong base of volunteers and links to faith-based communities and to finding vehicles and emergency funds to help newly-arriving refugees."

"He was passionate about hiking and climbing. If it is possible to compare Attila's selfless dedication to refugees to climbing Mt. Everest, a dream he hoped to accomplish some day, then Attila did indeed reach the summit." ■



PEEK INSIDE LOST BOYS CENTER

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- Naming rooms and facilities after individual and corporate benefactors.

- Sale of cow figures by Lost Boys continues throughout the Valley. This talent—molding clay figures of Sudanese-type cows, then firing and painting them—has raised more than \$30,000 for the Lost Boys Center since November 2003. Churches, service



clubs, book stores, and retail outlets can't get enough of these eye-catchers.

- On Nov. 12, the Arizona Small Business Association will donate revenues from its annual golf tournament. "We dived into Lost Boys, and believe its cause is passionate and driven," said Sherry Azzarella, Communications Director. "We are also pleased we have been able to help them find Valley jobs."

For more information on the Anderson photos, cow figurines, or how to secure Lost Boy programs for organizations like service clubs and churches, call Camelia Assem at 602-262-2300, Ext. 14, or email azlostboys@yahoo.com. ■

JFCS ASSISTS WOMEN SET UP BUSINESSES

Talent plus good product development, record keeping and marketing is the same worldwide—whether it be Somalia, Africa, or Tucson, Ariz.

That's what the Jewish Family and Children's Services of Southern Arizona (JFCS) believes. And it's working for the 300-plus Somali Bantu community in Greater Tucson.

"Somali women refugees brought a talent for making jewelry, and a desire to earn the income needed to keep single and married mothers at home," shared Metta Brogden, JFCS Vice President of Resettlement.

With \$8,000 in DES grants in hand over two years, JFCS has helped refugees grow a small business of selling necklaces in a price range of \$4 to \$40. The first major purchase was a supply of beads at the Tucson Gem & Mineral Show to get them started.

"To date, we've sold mostly at trade shows and events. Our next step is to find stores to carry our necklaces, then add earrings and bracelets to our product line," said Brogden.

"I took some jewelry to a New York conference recently, and found a keen interest. That's very encouraging."

The Tucson project is the first of its kind for any Somali Bantu group in the U.S. But stay-at-home mothers and mothers-to-be—10 women currently are involved in making jewelry—may add other skills to earn supplemental income.

With the jewelry program well underway, JFCS is encouraging another small refugee business—certification to provide home child care.

"Right now, we're very pleased with the jewelry program and its future. Mothers are even involving their children in the beading and knotting. It's a cliché, but this is truly a win-win-win situation," said Brogden. ■



Somali women display their colorful jewelry produced to sell through the small-business incubation program.

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